

**Starting from Scratch:
Building Community Support for Labor Organizing in Indianapolis**

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Over the last twenty years, many scholars have argued that if the American labor movement is to revitalize itself, it must forge stronger ties with the communities where its members live (e.g. Brecher and Costello 1990; Moody 1998; Needleman 1998; Clawson 2003; Nissen 2003; Nissen and Russo 2006; Simmons and Harding 2009). Labor and community coalitions have contributed to important gains in union membership, especially in the low-wage, service jobs that are difficult to relocate abroad. Coalitions have succeeded in passing living-wage ordinances that provide benefits for workers, both union and non-union (Reynolds 1999; Luce 2005; Levin-Waldman 2008; Devinez 2008). Scholars have analyzed these coalitions, categorized them, and theorized about how they might improve their effectiveness (Buttigieg et. al 2009; Cockfield et. al. 2009). In *Labor in the New Urban Battleground*, Lowell Turner asks why unions have had better success with coalitions in some cities than others. Turner suggests that two factors are most important: “Agency,” the choices and strategies of union leaders and their organizations, and “opportunity structure,” the presence or absence of barriers in the institutional, political and social context of a given city (6).

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This study examines three ongoing union organizing campaigns in Indianapolis that have sought community support to win a first contract: the Service Employees International Union's (SEIU) drive to organize the city's janitors and UNITE/HERE's effort to organize hotels and campus food-service workers. By examining the opportunity structure for organizing in Indianapolis, and comparing the community outreach efforts of the three campaigns, we can assess their effectiveness in matching their organizing strategies to local conditions and draw some conclusions about the possibilities and pitfalls of community unionism in cities like Indianapolis that lack a strong tradition of community organizing. Although Ruth Milkman (2010) and others have suggested that the "L.A. model" of creating powerful labor-community coalitions is replicable in other cities, important differences in the local opportunity structures force organizers to improvise innovative strategies if they hope to win victories for workers and their communities.

The study is based on eight years of participant observation of the three campaigns in my capacity as director of the Masarachia Scholars Program at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). Founded by Sam Masarachia, an organizer for the steelworkers who went on to do community and senior citizen organizing after his retirement, the Masarachia Scholars Program provides full tuition and fees for twelve students interested in labor and community organizing. In addition to course work in labor history and organizing, students do service-learning projects and internships with labor unions and community organizations and write detailed reports about their experiences, and I draw on these reports in the study. Between 2010 and 2014, I interviewed five union organizers, three members of the clergy, the current and former executive directors of Central Indiana Jobs with Justice, and three student interns, all of whom were involved in

coalition building in Indianapolis. Three additional clergy members completed surveys about their reasons for getting involved with labor and their experiences. I participated in planning meetings and actions in all three campaigns, taking detailed notes and collecting campaign publications. I have served on the Workers Rights Board of Central Indiana Jobs with Justice since 2007.

The local opportunity structure

By all accounts, Indianapolis is a tough town for this kind of organizing. A stronghold of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s, the birthplace of the John Birch Society, and a city where the Civil Rights movement was characterized by local historian Richard Peirce as “polite protest,” involving protracted dialogue between black leaders and the white establishment rather than community organization and resistance, Indianapolis is not only politically conservative, it also has a dominant culture that values avoiding confrontation.

In the 1970s and 80s, Indianapolis was a sleepy backwater, often called “Naptown” or “India-no-place.” The local economy, heavily reliant on manufacturing, was battered by layoffs and plant closures, shedding 28,500 jobs in the 1979-82 recession (Madison 1994). In 1985 Western Electric closed its Indianapolis plant, costing the city 7000 jobs (Wallihan 1994). As the economy worsened, downtown Indianapolis was blighted by deteriorating, abandoned buildings. The director of the Department of Metropolitan Development at that time admitted that he was stuck promoting “a city that nobody wanted to live in,” where “the mayor would mortgage his mother-in-law to get jobs downtown” (Schimmel 2002).

As the city’s social fabric frayed, pharmaceutical manufacturer Eli Lilly and Co., one

of the city's largest employers, found it increasingly difficult to attract top scientists and executives. The Lilly Endowment, a charitable trust established in 1937, had over \$1.2 billion in assets by the early 1970s (Schimmel 2002). With Lilly family members and executives of the pharmaceutical giant on its board, the Endowment has a keen interest in the future of the city and makes most of its grants close to home. The Tax Reform Act of 1969 required the endowment to donate 5% of its assets annually, which meant that about \$50 million per year became available for local investment. According to Kimberley Schimmel, the Endowment leveraged those assets to create an "urban regime," which she defines as an "interest group with common stakes in urban development who use their political and cultural resources to intensify land use for profit" (264). An informal "city committee," composed of junior executives of the major downtown firms, developed a plan to rebrand Indianapolis as the amateur sports capitol of the nation. They promoted "public-private partnerships" to invest in sports and tourism related development as the way to revitalize downtown. The urban regime defined the city's problems in terms of attracting young professionals, rather than dealing with the immediate needs of residents. Between 1974 and 1991, more than \$168 million was spent on new sports facilities, with the Lilly Endowment contributing over \$60 million and the city offering tax breaks, grants, and other subsidies.

Public subsidies for downtown projects increased almost eight-fold in the 1990s and doubled again in the first decade of this century, as the city tried to attract tourists and conventioners with an expanded convention center and luxury hotels.¹ During the 1970s, the public picked up 30% of the tab for downtown investment, but by the 1990s the city had become more generous, chipping in 76% to lure luxury hotels and twice expand its

convention center. Among the more spectacular giveaways: a \$24 million subsidy to the Conrad hotel in 2000 and a \$48.5 million “investment” in the JWMarriott hotel in 2011, not to mention \$339 million for the convention center expansions meant to attract people to fill the hotels. These infrastructure investments were sold to the public as “job creators” that would offset the loss of manufacturing jobs. However, Indianapolis hospitality workers are among the lowest paid in the country, averaging less than \$8 hour in 2011, so the city’s transition from a manufacturing center to a tourist destination has left many residents in poverty.

The partial consolidation of city and county government in 1969 -- dubbed “UniGov” even though it left out four towns and several important city services -- helped the urban regime implement its agenda. The merger increased the city’s population by about 60%, which brought greater federal aid, and the larger tax base meant the city could borrow more money before reaching the 2% cap established in state law (Blomquist and Parks 1995). By making the suburbs part of the city, Unigov allowed the business elite to leave downtown and still retain political control over its destiny. For instance, by manipulating Indianapolis’ complex patchwork of taxing districts, suburban city councilors can increase the taxes of inner-city residents to subsidize private development, without having to pay the taxes themselves or inflict them on their constituents. Unigov left intact several municipal corporations, governed by appointed boards of directors, with taxing and spending powers independent of the mayor and city council. These boards control important functions, including public transportation, health and hospitals, the public library, and downtown development. This profoundly undemocratic system puts vital city activities beyond the reach of voters, and it has allowed the urban regime to pursue its

growth agenda in spite of widespread public concern that more pressing needs, like the public schools, are being ignored.

While public money and corporate donations fueled a downtown building boom, nearby working-class neighborhoods were neglected. Geographer David Wilson (1993) characterized downtown Indianapolis in the 1990s as “an island of concentrated reinvestment . . . within a broader context of sustained deterioration.” Governed by an unresponsive corporate-political elite, overwhelmed by economic hardships, and stuck in a squalid neighborhood just across the tracks from the city center, many of the residents of Fountain Square who spoke to Wilson were overcome by “hopelessness, fatalism and political ennui,” which had created an “anti-activist and non-confrontational poor people.” Wilson found that his informants tended to blame themselves for their condition and to be cynical about prospects for improving the neighborhood.

Although we should be wary of generalizing the results of an intensive study of one neighborhood to the city as a whole, it is fair to say that most Indianapolis residents are reluctant to make demands on government or corporate elites and prefer to deal with social problems through volunteerism and faith-based charities. Although Indianapolis has hundreds of neighborhood associations, they see themselves as partners with city government and local foundations. Dependent on city grants to fund their activities, most neighborhood associations are content to take what they can get rather than risking what they have to fight for more resources. The few issue organizations that exist have limited resources and little capacity to mobilize members. Although Indianapolis has a handful of churches that might be described as “activist” -- because they have social justice committees or are led by preachers who have a commitment to workers’ rights -- most

churches reflect the conservative nature of the city and its strong bias against labor unions. In 2005, newly elected governor Mitch Daniels revoked the collective bargaining rights of state workers (Wilson and Early 2012). In 2012, a Republican super-majority in the state legislature passed so-called “Right to Work” legislation, in spite of a protracted walkout by Democrats and protests by organized labor.

All of these factors have made it difficult for unions to recruit community support for their organizing drives. Elsewhere, successful coalitions have been built by bringing unions together with activist churches and community organizations. In what Ruth Milkman and her colleagues have dubbed the “L.A. Model,” unions combine intensive worker organizing with outreach to clergy, politicians, and social justice organizations to build a coalition around an issue of broad benefit to the community, such as a living-wage or local-hire ordinance (Milkman, Bloom and Narro 2010). Unions fund the L.A. Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE) an advocacy organization that since 1993 has provided economic and social research demonstrating the widespread economic benefits of the coalition’s proposals (Stuart 2010). Together, unions and their supporters can mobilize hundreds of people, staging “public dramas” (Chun 2005) to capture media attention and make the workers’ struggles a part of the public discourse. In Los Angeles, unions enjoy the support of Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE), an organization of over 600 clergy who work closely with both SEIU and UNITE/HERE (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2008). Since at least 2001 when John Sweeney, then president of the AFL-CIO said, “We see L.A. as a model for cities across the country,” organizers have been trying to replicate this dynamic coalition in markedly different urban contexts (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2008, 122).

In cities like Indianapolis, which lack the social justice infrastructure that has been created in L.A. over the last thirty years, unions have had to “start from scratch” and adapt the model by improvising innovative strategies. The phrase “starting from scratch” came up often in my interviews with union organizers who were frustrated by the on-again-off-again history of labor-community collaboration in Indianapolis. They lamented the fact that although some promising coalitions had been put together over the years, they were never sustained, and after a lull in the action they needed to be rebuilt. “Starting from scratch” doesn’t mean starting with nothing: the cooking metaphor is meant to suggest starting with only the most basic ingredients, nothing pre-mixed or ready made. The basic ingredients for organizing a labor-community coalition *do* exist in Indianapolis, but plenty of mixing and stirring is still required to combine the ingredients into an effective coalition, as we will see as we examine the three campaigns.

SEIU Brings Justice for Janitors to Indianapolis

In 2004 SEIU began organizing janitors in Indianapolis as part of its “Justice for Janitors” campaign. Community support played a large role in previous SEIU victories in Los Angeles and New Haven (Milkman 2006; Rhomberg and Simmons 2005), and the union brought in a young organizer who had experience in campus campaigns and subsequently in janitor organizing on the east coast. The literature on community unionism stresses the importance of “bridge builders” who know how to find common ground between groups that may not recognize how their interests coincide, and SEIU’s lead organizer fit this profile (Brecher and Costello 1990). While in college she brought together students who were concerned about the exploitation of workers in sweatshops with those who were

advocating for a more inclusive curriculum and a more diverse faculty and gained their support for a union organizing drive for campus janitors. In New York she worked with a local that already had strong ties to the community, but when she arrived in Indianapolis she found she had to build a community coalition from scratch.

Armed with little more than a few contacts supplied by the regional organizer, she began by reaching out to the churches, starting the long process of building up trust. In this she was hampered by another aspect of Indianapolis' culture: it's distrust of outsiders. This came up in every interview conducted for this study, with city natives as well as transplants pointing out how politicians stress their local roots more in Indianapolis than elsewhere and new acquaintances always ask you where are you from, especially if you work for a union. When William Hudnutt, who later became mayor, first arrived in Indianapolis as the pastor of the Second Presbyterian church, he was told, "We are a town that will welcome you, and then stand back for ten years to see how you do." But of course unions don't have ten years to build toward a first contract, so organizers have to demonstrate their commitment to working with local organizations by repeatedly attending their meetings and waiting patiently for an opportunity to bring up labor issues. As one organizer put it, "you have to spend a lot of time at their meetings to even get the microphone once, and unless you're there all the time, they won't come out for your actions. Things move at a much slower pace here and relationships take a long time to build."

The SEIU organizer built these relationships by patiently attending meetings and listening to local concerns, but the first real breakthrough came when the union took a stand on immigration issues, which had been brought to the forefront by the December 2005 passage by the House of Representatives of a repressive immigration bill sponsored

by Wisconsin Republican James Sensenbrenner that would have penalized churches and other non-profits for aiding undocumented workers. The issue was important both to the Latino janitorial workers that the union hoped to organize and to new allies who were concerned about workers but not deeply enough to become actively engaged until the connection was made between immigration issues and workers' rights. SEIU worked closely with the Immigrant Rights Coalition of Indiana throughout the campaign. Each group attended the other's rallies, and the close association between the two encouraged congregations who supported immigrants to join the SEIU campaign for janitors.

Heckscher and Palmer (1993) argue that this type of reciprocal relationship between a union and its community partner is rare, with unions more often adopting a "labor solidarity model" that relies on the "enthusiasm of solidarity" to rally community groups behind an agenda set by the union to further its own goals. Most of the SEIU campaign fits this model: potential partners were recruited by being invited to listen to workers tell stories of how they had been mistreated on the job and then an appeal was made to right these wrongs through collective action. Clergy who were active in the campaign report that they were motivated by a sense of responsibility toward workers that grew out of their religious faith, rather than from a hope that the union would help them with projects or causes important to their churches. Organizers who were interviewed for this study recognize the weaknesses of the "labor solidarity model," including the potential for burn out over the course of a long campaign if the sole motivation for participation is the satisfaction of doing the right thing. They also note that clergy have little incentive to engage their congregations in the struggle, risking a backlash motivated by anti-union bias, if no concrete benefits of participation are anticipated. Three Indianapolis faith leaders

who have attended union events stated that although the cause of workers rights is important to them, they do not talk about their collaboration with unions with their parishioners. On the other hand, union organizers whose primary responsibility is to sign up workers, in addition to researching and running a corporate campaign, have little extra time to devote to the concerns of their coalition partners. So although the reciprocal relationship between SEIU and the Immigrant Rights Coalition of Indiana can be seen as an anomaly in a campaign that relied more heavily on the labor solidarity model, it can also be seen as a harbinger of a different model, “social movement unionism,” which connects workers and their unions with broader coalitions for economic and social justice (Waterman 1993 & Tattersall 2009).

In spite of the inherent difficulties of organizing in Indianapolis and the limitations of the labor solidarity model, SEIU was able to build an influential coalition that provided vital support to the union organizing drive. Coalition partners attended and spoke at rallies, went on delegations to management, wrote letters to the editor, signed petitions and community declarations of support, and provided meeting spaces. The Community Faith and Labor Coalition mobilized a half-dozen activists to hand out Valentine’s Day cards to tenants in targeted buildings, asking them to thank their janitor for his or her hard work. The local chapter of Jobs with Justice (JWJ) connected the union to the small activist community that does exist in Indianapolis and helped with turnout and logistics for rallies. JWJ also sponsored a Workers Rights Board hearing to allow employees to air their grievances and bring charges of worker harassment and racial discrimination before the public. In May 2007 six clergy members engaged in civil disobedience and were arrested for blocking the entrance to an office tower targeted by the union. All these activities

helped to publicize the campaign, and the visible role taken by clergy added a degree of credibility and legitimacy, at least for some members of a suspicious public.

When the union finally achieved neutrality agreements with cleaning firms that together controlled 60% of the local market and began bargaining a contract, community support became even more vital. Workers and organizers, who felt they were on the cusp of a victory, were frustrated by delaying tactics and management's unwillingness to bargain in good faith. Two days before the union was to go on strike, the *Indianapolis Star*, which had been hostile to the union throughout the campaign, published an editorial citing widespread community support for the janitors' demands and urging management to bargain seriously and end the impasse. The defection of a reliably anti-labor newspaper was a victory for the coalition's strategy to frame the battle as a fight for the future of the city, not just an attempt to win a union for janitors. The cleaning contractors returned to the bargaining table and signed an agreement in a matter of days.

Unfortunately the contract delivered few immediate gains to workers, and employers soon began to ignore provisions that called for small, incremental gains. A pay hike of \$1.50 an hour was to be phased in over 4 years, and health benefits were not included in the contract. Workers who had been illegally fired for their union activity found that contractors could refuse to rehire them on the grounds that some of SEIU's picketing had also violated National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) rules. Even more damaging to the coalition was the loss of leadership at the new local almost immediately after the contract was signed. For the next nine months SEIU in Indianapolis limped along with a few short-term, part-time staff and temporary substitutes brought in from elsewhere. Community partners moved on to new endeavors and the coalition fell apart.

Sensing the new local's weakness, employers began to terminate contracts and fire union workers. The campaign's outcome can be summarized in this way: the union got to declare victory; the community partners got to celebrate and go home; and the workers got the shaft. When a new full-time organizer was hired in 2009, he had a hard time locating any of the workers who had joined the union over the course of the campaign. Without workers to tell their stories, he found it difficult to re-engage former community partners and make new connections. Once again, a new labor and community coalition would have to be built from scratch.

UNITE/HERE's approach to Labor-Community Coalitions

In the meantime, another union with a history of reaching out to the community for help in organizing low-wage workers had come to town. UNITE/HERE, created by the 2004 merger of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE) union and the Union of Needletrade Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE), launched an organizing drive in two hotels in late 2007. In 2008 UNITE/HERE added a full-time staff person with responsibility for research and community organizing, which provides the union with a clear advantage over SEIU, where the task of engaging the community fell to an already overburdened lead organizer. UNITE/HERE's community organizer from 2008--2011 is a native Hoosier who was an elementary-school teacher for seven years. She credits that experience with giving her the listening and communication skills that are so important in organizing. Talking with the parents of her students, she realized that they work two or three jobs to make ends meet, so they don't have the time and energy to help their children succeed. This convinced her that in order to help children she needed to help their parents

lift themselves out of poverty. She feels that her deep roots in Indiana make it easier for her to reassure wary Hoosiers that she's not an "outside agitator" and provide her with a strong motive to continue the hard work of community organizing over the long haul: she wants Indianapolis to be a better place because it's her home.

In August 2008 thirteen workers in the bell service department of the Westin hotel were informed that they would no longer have jobs at the end of the month because the hotel was subcontracting the work to Towne Park, a corporation which touts itself as "the premier provider of hospitality and parking solutions," and claims its employees are "Driven To Serve" (Towne Park). In Indianapolis, doormen with ten to fifteen years on the job were told they could "apply online" to Towne Park if they wanted to continue at the Westin. William Selm, an award-winning 14-year employee, who had been overheard by a supervisor expressing sympathy for restaurant workers whose jobs had also been outsourced, was driven from the Westin and offered a part-time position in another hotel at a 58% reduction in pay (Subcontracting 2009). The subcontracting shell game is increasingly common in the industry, and it poses obvious difficulties for union organizing.

In response, UNITE/HERE teamed up with Central Indiana Jobs with Justice to hold a Workers' Rights Board hearing on subcontracting. The event brought hotel workers together with state employees whose positions had been privatized and AT&T workers who had been fired and told they could reapply for their jobs through a subcontractor. State employees testified about how outsourcing led to drastic staffing cuts in Family and Social Services that left vulnerable citizens at risk. AT&T workers talked about losing full-time positions with benefits and being forced to apply for "temporary," part-time work at lower wages. The hearing raised public awareness of outsourcing, demonstrated its

prevalence across industries, and made its threat to workers clear. Although the union managed to keep the story of the discharged doormen in the public eye for over a year, culminating with a meeting between William Selm and President Obama in June 2009 (Layden 2009), none of the workers was reinstated and outsourcing continues in Indianapolis and elsewhere.

Taking a page from the L.A. model, UNITE/HERE launched the “Voice for All” campaign in 2011, aimed at winning a tax refund for low-wage workers employed in the city’s “Professional Sports Development Area,” where major hotels have benefitted from tax abatements. The campaign was designed to call public attention to the subsidies enjoyed by sports teams and hotels – subsidies that had been justified by claiming they would bring good jobs to Indianapolis – and to the plight of low-wage workers in the district. Although superficially similar to efforts elsewhere to raise the minimum wage or secure community benefit agreements, UNITE/HERE’s strategy in Indianapolis was more narrowly focused on the workers they were trying to organize. This narrow focus made it more challenging for organizers to explain to potential community partners how the ordinance would benefit their constituents. Instead of packaging the ordinance with city subsidies to hotels, as LAANE’s “Plan for a New Century” did in L.A., the Indianapolis campaign took rhetorical aim at subsidies that had already been awarded (Stuart 2010). This strategy provoked the business community without actually threatening it in a meaningful way, since UNITE/HERE never asked for the subsidies to be withdrawn. Unlike in L.A., where the hotels were offered clear incentives to agree to higher wages, the tax-refund campaign had nothing to offer the Hyatt or the Westin, and they joined with the Chamber of Commerce to oppose the measure. The proposal’s best chance for success

seemed to lie in the unwillingness of Republicans to vote against a tax cut on the eve of an election, but the lack of broad public benefit and incentives for the business community made the “Voice for All” campaign an uphill battle from the start.

The UNITE/HERE community organizer who led the campaign had the help of three full-time, paid, college-student interns who made presentations to local community organizations, labor unions, and churches. The “Voice for All” campaign asked supporters to “Adopt A Worker” and speak on her behalf at city council meetings and other public events because workers face harassment on the job and illegal firings for speaking up for themselves. The ultimate goal was to turn out 200 people – a very large number by Indianapolis standards -- to the August 15, 2011 city council meeting and win passage of the measure. The organizers had their greatest successes when they brought workers along to tell their stories of being mistreated on the job. When they presented to union workers, they had to overcome bias against immigrants and a lack of understanding about wage theft and the brutal working conditions that confront non-union workers, but once these issues were addressed, union workers and retirees became strong supporters of UNITE/HERE.

Some local community organizations proved more resistant. One neighborhood association, which stood to benefit from an NFL-sponsored community development program linked to the 2012 Super Bowl, declined to participate for fear of losing that money. Likewise, groups receiving “Weed and Seed” grants² did not dare to rock the boat by supporting an ordinance certain to be opposed by the Republican mayor. However, other neighborhood associations, which had not received special treatment from city hall, responded favorably to the argument that the city’s priorities were misplaced, with too

much attention and investment focused on the downtown hospitality industry and too little on the neighborhoods where city residents live and work.

Like SEIU, UNITE/HERE has made a major effort to reach out to local clergy, an inevitable strategy in a conservative city with few viable community organizations. However, the fallout from SEIU's sudden abandonment of its earlier campaign made some clergy reluctant to commit their time and energy to another unionization effort. At this point, the Community Faith and Labor Coalition had only two retired clergy among its active members, and the Indianapolis Clergy Committee, which coordinated support for SEIU's campaign, had disbanded. Faced with these challenges, the "Adopt a Worker" campaign took an innovative approach to organizing places of worship. Rather than call on religious leaders to merely show up and pray, a tactic often maligned as "Rent a Collar," they sought out lay leaders and turned them into organizers capable of mobilizing their fellow parishioners (Olson 2012). Several of these volunteer organizers have remained active up to the present and helped UNITE/HERE in subsequent campaigns to organize food-service workers at three Indianapolis universities.

As a result of this three-pronged strategy of reaching out to community groups, unions, and places of worship, UNITE/HERE managed to turn out over 500 supporters, all wearing red shirts, to the city-county council meeting on August 15, 2011. Unfortunately, this overwhelming show of support, unprecedented in the annals of Indianapolis organizing, was not enough to persuade the Republican controlled council to pass the ordinance. However, the community organizers had created a structure that could mobilize large groups of people, and they used this power to turn out hundreds to city council meetings in the fall of 2011 and to a Super Bowl picket in February 2012. In the November 2011 elections,

the Republicans lost their majority on the city council, improving the local opportunity structure slightly. However, the role of the “Adopt-A-Worker” campaign in this is questionable, since the Democrat they supported most actively lost his bid for re-election.

UNITE/HERE has been somewhat successful in matching their organizing strategy to local conditions. Although the lead community organizer was a native Hoosier, and one of the student interns had lived in Indianapolis for ten years and understood the culture, the other two student interns were recent arrivals from Wisconsin who needed more guidance on how to connect with their audiences. They learned that union retirees were not moved by stories of the occupation of the Wisconsin state capitol, but they could connect with stories of housekeepers cleaning 35 rooms a day. Approaching places of worship through lay leaders rather than soliciting the support of clergy was also a strategy that paid big dividends. Not only did it lead to greater turnout, it also created opportunities for several people to grow from activists to organizers. Although the “Adopt-A-Worker” slogan was questioned by some progressives who found it patronizing, it resonated in working-class communities where residents know the fear of speaking out on the job. One organizer claims that Hoosiers are often quicker to respond to an injustice done to others than they are to organize to win something for themselves, so framing an appeal for support in terms of fairness is effective. In spite of the failure of the tax-refund ordinance, the organizing that went into the campaign strengthened the local social-justice infrastructure by developing community leaders and educating them about labor issues and local government. Although there is still no union hotel in Indiana at this writing, the July 2013 national agreement between the union and Hyatt improves the local opportunity structure for worker organizing enough to warrant hope that soon there will be.

Organizing University Food-Service Workers

From the start, UNITE/HERE has made a significant effort to reach out to university students and professors. IUPUI Students often work in the hotel industry, and they brought the campaign to organize the Hyatt to campus by speaking to classes and inviting their peers to join them at rallies. The union sponsors well-structured service-learning experiences and internships that motivate students by educating them about how the industry exploits workers. Interns develop organizing skills by engaging in a campaign focused on community unionism. Many students put in more hours than they are required to and demonstrate the depth of their commitment by remaining active even after the course that got them involved ends.

In 2010 UNITE/HERE began to organize food-service workers at IUPUI who work for Chartwells, a division of the British-based Compass Group. Once again, community support was essential. Workers and organizers visited classes, talked to professors, students, and staff, building a base of support for the union. A turning point in the campaign came on September 23, 2011 when a group of about twenty faculty, students, staff, and workers went on a delegation to Chartwells management and cornered both the campus manager and the regional manager. Workers described the poor working conditions and lack of respect they endured on the job. Students, faculty and staff declared their support for the workers and described their vision of a campus community where all workers are paid a living wage and treated with dignity. Soon after, Chartwells signed a neutrality agreement, and later that fall the workers ratified their first union contract.

Since then UNITE/HERE has used the same strategy of mobilizing the campus community to win contracts for food service workers at Butler University and Marian University.

Of course the opportunity structure for unions is more favorable on campus than it is in the city of Indianapolis. In terms of resource mobilization theory (McCarthy and Zald 1977), even a public, urban university like IUPUI is relatively resource rich: students have time and opportunity to meet and plan actions; they have access to information and communication technology and the ability to create online social networks (Biddix and Park 2008). More importantly, they have direct access to the workplace, both as customers and as employees. Campus food-service companies are more vulnerable than downtown hotels: they have a vested interest in keeping their customers happy and maintaining a positive image. As the success of the United Students Against Sweatshops has shown, campuses can be fertile ground for labor organizing if unions provide training and support for a core group of activists who make good use of the resources available (Van Dyke, Dixon and Carlon 2007). In Indianapolis, organizing campus food service delivered a series of relatively easy victories and helped UNITE/HERE build its base of community support and maintain a sense of momentum in the absence of progress in organizing downtown hotels.

From a Labor Solidarity Model to Social Movement Unionism

When we compare these three campaigns we can draw some conclusions about strategies that are likely to promote greater success for community-labor coalitions in cities like Indianapolis. Although the essay began by describing how Indianapolis is different, its conservatism, distrust of unions, worker passivity, and lack of community organizing is distressingly common in the U.S. today. If the labor movement wants to

extend its early successes in community unionism into the American heartland, it needs to learn how to do it in places like Indianapolis.

In the smaller cities of the Midwest, it's important to have local organizers with credibility in and a deep commitment to the community. This is not to say that unions can't bring in organizers from elsewhere, but it is vital to have locals leading the effort to engage the community. The Masarachia Scholars Program is educating a new generation of Indianapolis organizers. Over the past fourteen years, scholars have completed 67 internships, totaling over 10,000 hours, with local unions and community groups. One of our recent graduates is now executive director of Central Indiana Jobs with Justice, and one of SEIU's Indianapolis organizers first worked for the union as a service-learning project in my organizing class. Steve Early (2009) has criticized SEIU for staffing their locals with college-educated, middle-class people who have never worked as janitors or security guards. If a college education is essential to advancement, unions should provide scholarship opportunities for members and their children, so they can develop the organizing skills they will need to run their own unions in the future. Whether or not they pursue a degree, workers should be trained as community organizers. Building coalitions and creating community support for union organizing is a time-consuming and demanding job that is too important to be left entirely to union staff.

David Dobbie (2009) argues that successful coalitions rely on the active engagement of at least one group from each of three sectors: union, church, and community organization. In Indianapolis and other cities where neighborhood-based community organizations are weak, we need to go beyond Dobbie's trinity and involve issue organizations, such as those working on immigrant rights, homelessness, and the

environment, and show them how the battle for economic justice will improve the prospects for progress on the problems that interest them most.

Since 2012 UNITE/HERE has been working with the Indianapolis Congregation Action Network, or INDYCAN, the local PICO³ affiliate, on a pathway to citizenship, an issue of great importance to their members. Milkman (2010) suggests that the growth of the Latino population nationwide is one factor that makes the L.A. Model of organizing viable in other cities. After a period of steady growth in the 1990s, Indianapolis saw an explosion in its Latino population beginning in 1999 (Littlepage 2006). While Latinos comprised an insignificant 1% of total population in 1990, the 2010 census revealed that they are now more than 9%. However, the Latino population of Indianapolis is dispersed, with no identifiable “barrio” serving as a focal point for the community. In spite of the sudden surge in Latino population, Indianapolis’ 9% is still a far cry from Los Angeles’ 47%. Although these factors may make organizing more difficult, given the prevalence of Latinos in hotel and food-service work, an alliance with INDYCAN on immigration issues seems like a natural strategy for UNITE/HERE.

INDYCAN’s website boasts over twenty member congregations, and they have drawn hundreds of people to marches, rallies, and prayer vigils for immigration reform. In the fall of 2013 about a dozen self-styled “pilgrims” walked from Indianapolis to the office of Representative Susan Brooks in Anderson, a distance of about 48 miles, to encourage her to support a pathway to citizenship (“Walk” 2013). Like the public dramas that have been so prominent in the struggles of low-wage Latino workers in L.A., the march took on the trappings of religion and became a pilgrimage, punctuated by prayer vigils at churches along the way (Quigley 2014). Although this alliance is promising, INDYCAN’s plan of

action for the next five years suggests it will not provide much direct support for the union's efforts to organize workers. Instead the plan focuses on job training, public safety, housing, and health, in addition to immigration reform. PICO network leaders in five states joined fast food workers in one-day strikes in December 2013, but not in Indianapolis, where there was not a single collar in sight ("Faith Leaders Join Fast Food Strikes" 2013). Far from being comparable to a group like CLUE, who muster more impressive resources and focus on workplace issues, INDYCAN may actually weaken the labor-community coalition by absorbing the energies of clergy who once were active on labor issues.

More promising is the long-term alliance of both SEIU and UNITE/HERE with Central Indiana Jobs with Justice. Although for most of its history JWJ has had to make do with a part-time organizer and a core group of active members numbering in the teens, effective labor and community coalitions in Indianapolis are unthinkable without JWJ. By welcoming individual members and connecting them with the leaders of local unions and community organizations in a culture of solidarity, JWJ provides a place where people who are concerned about workers' rights issues can come together to plan collective action. Throughout the campaigns described previously, JWJ members have participated in actions ranging from picketing, leafleting, and tabling to civil disobedience. In November 2010 Central Indiana Jobs with Justice hosted a three-day training session, facilitated by JWJ national staff, which increased the organizing skills and built camaraderie among a group of about thirty local activists.

Central Indiana Jobs with Justice has had an active Workers Rights Board since 1999. The board averages one hearing a year, primarily reacting to requests from workers, including janitors, security guards, warehouse workers and hotel employees. In 2013 the

Workers Rights Board held a hearing on wage theft that brought together two restaurant workers, a carpenter, and a former hotel worker to share their stories of not being paid all the wages they were due. After hearing their testimony, the WRB panel and members of the audience suggested specific, concrete actions to be taken to address the problem and published their findings in a report (available at <http://www.centralindianajwj.org/wrb>). Workers' Rights Board hearings can raise public awareness of an issue, but more importantly, by bringing together a diverse group of workers with faith leaders, politicians, activists, community leaders and academics, workers rights boards have the potential to educate people about common issues, agitate them by exposing abuses, and inspire the solidarity necessary to organize.

Unions need to involve the academic community in more than writing letters and signing petitions by demonstrating that neoliberalism's attack on workers does not stop at the campus gates and that job security and academic freedom are being undermined by the replacement of tenured faculty with exploitable and disposable part-time teachers. Jobs with Justice organized a panel discussion at IUPUI that brought together adjunct faculty, who were beginning to organize for better pay and working conditions, with downtown hotel workers employed by an subcontracting firm. They told similar stories about a lack of respect on the job, inadequate resources to do their jobs properly, and the stress this put on workers and their families. Students learned that their education was being compromised by a system that charged them more even as it spent less of their money on instruction. When people begin to see that their individual problems are similar to others, they begin to change personal problems into social issues that can be addressed through collective action. In this case, associate faculty members became active supporters of the

union campaigns to organize hotel workers and campus food services, meeting with workers in small groups to share their common concerns, writing letters of support and going on delegations to management. As a result of the food-service worker campaigns, UNITE/HERE has cultivated relationships with faculty and staff that not only could be useful for organizing, but that might also result in collaborative, community based research of the sort that Los Angeles unions can turn to LAANE for.

Unions need to cultivate the next generation of organizers by offering service-learning and internship opportunities that engage students in all aspects of organizing and provide them with the guidance they need to connect successfully with workers and their communities. The AFL-CIO's Union Summer program seems promising (Van Dyke, Dixon and Carlon 2007), but scholarship programs for low-wage workers and their children that involve them in activism year round could do even more to foster a new generation of working-class leaders. Cultivating reciprocal, local, grassroots connections between academics and unions holds more promise for union renewal than national, letterhead coalitions like the short-lived "Scholars Artists and Writers for Social Justice" (ca. 1997-2000).

The connection between unions and faith groups that has been the mainstay of local coalitions must be strengthened by getting members, not just clergy, involved in campaigns. UNITE/HERE has had some success in mobilizing lay leaders, but in Indianapolis SEIU continues to rely on the labor-solidarity model. The "rent-a-collar" approach may provide a religious voice to offer a prayer at a rally, but by failing to engage the entire congregation, it neglects an important source of power for a working class movement. When union members get involved in community organizing, they can talk to

fellow worshippers who often have similar issues at work and get more people involved in the movement.

Models and Movements

All of the organizers interviewed for this study endorse the social movement model of organizing in principle, but they recognize that it often conflicts with the more immediate and pressing need to sign up workers and negotiate a contract. Sociologist Richard Sullivan (2010) put it succinctly: “a union’s primary role is as an agent in the labor market, rather than as a movement organization” (812). The social movement model requires patience and a long-term commitment to training union members as community leaders, building the capacity of community partners, and encouraging solidarity across a wide range of issues. Lowell Turner (2007) reminds us that when we speak of “social movement unionism” we mean unions using the tactics of social justice movements – coalition building, civil disobedience, public dramas -- in the *absence* of an actual social movement, and in that context unions face “major challenges” (15). In Indianapolis, where the tactics of social justice movements were rarely used even in the 1960s, unions need to be especially careful in their choices to avoid alienating a suspicious public.

The most promising recent addition to the social-justice infrastructure in Indianapolis is the opening of the Indianapolis Worker Justice Center in November 2013 (Quigley 2013). The combination of service provision and organizing potential that has made worker centers so successful elsewhere should be an ideal fit for Indianapolis (Fine 2006). Both SEIU and UNITE/HERE have been involved from the beginning, working closely with the Community Faith and Labor Coalition, Jobs with Justice, the regional

council of Carpenters and the Indianapolis local. Sullivan (2010) suggests that workers centers and other community-based organizations, working in the “space between unions,” may hold the key for union revival because their legal status allows them to use more aggressive movement tactics and encourages innovative organizing. In Indianapolis the workers center may also help to keep activists busy in the times between active union organizing drives, holding important aspects of the coalition together and eliminating the need to “start from scratch” every time.

Leaving behind the labor-solidarity model and adopting social movement unionism requires unions to invest more time and resources in the communities where their workers live, but by making this investment, unions have a chance to go beyond the immediate goal of signing up more members and contribute to improvements in the social justice infrastructure that make future gains possible.

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¹ Figures in this paragraph are taken from a white paper prepared by UNITE/HERE: "Inhospitable: How Indianapolis' investment in downtown tourism has contributed to poverty in Marion County," distributed to the union's community supporters and the media

in 2009. The report lists total public subsidies for 1980-89 of \$60.7 million, 1990-99 of \$478 million and 2000-09 of \$1.58 billion.

² “Weed and Seed” is a program of the United States Department of Justice designed “to prevent, control, and reduce violent crime, drug abuse, and gang activity in targeted high-crime neighborhoods across the country. The goal of the strategy is to “weed out” violent crime, drug use, and gang activity from selected neighborhoods and then to help prevent crime from reoccurring by “seeding” those sites with a wide range of public and private efforts to empower and develop them” (<http://www.justice.gov/usao/nye/weedseed.html>). In Indianapolis, the program also receives financial support from the city and local charitable foundations (<http://www.urbantech.org/cbos/in00/about.html>).

³ PICO is a network of congregation-based community groups organizing around social justice issues. < <http://www.piconetwork.org/> >